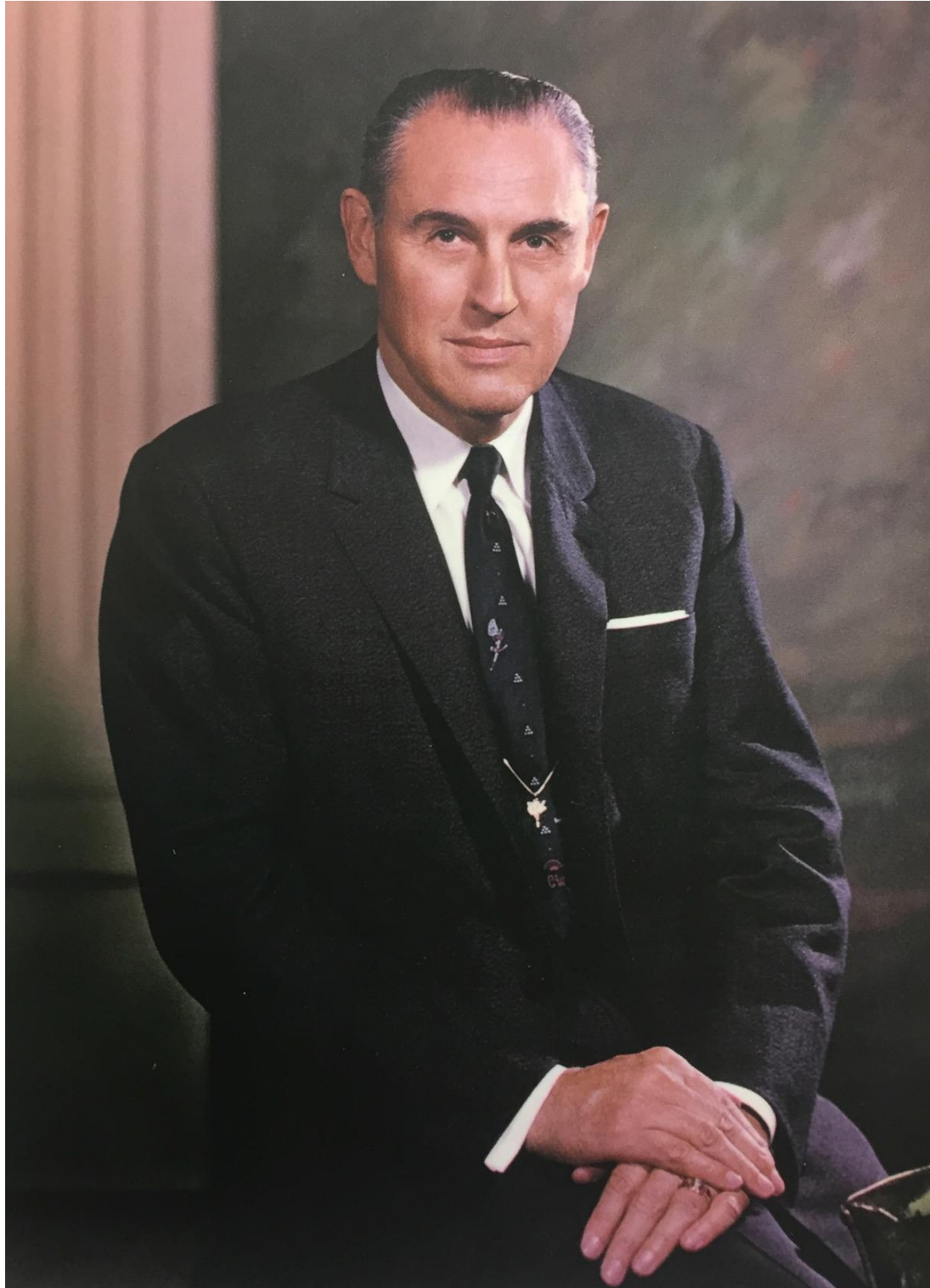


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**John Earl Fetzer**

March 25, 1901 – February 20, 1991

John E. Fetzer was one of America's most accomplished, mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century entrepreneurs. All his endeavors were motivated by service to his community, his country and the world. It was a demonstration of loving in the purest sense, as taught by Jesus Christ and spiritual masters throughout time.

John Fetzer began his professional career as one of America's pioneering radio engineers. He was fascinated with science, having been captivated by the Tom Swift science fiction books in his youth. This budding imagination compelled him to look beyond the limitations of what was thought possible when he tackled a task. He was also a lifelong spiritual seeker, and as he grew older, he pursued the integration of science and the spirit.

Over the years, as his financial fortunes grew, John actively searched for and financially supported scientists and mystics on the frontiers of our understanding about the nature of reality. In the 1970's and 80's, he supported the study of the parapsychological sciences, and especially energy medicine. At the same time, he sincerely sought ever deeper experience of spiritual realities through dedicated study and participation in a number of approaches and disciplines based in Eastern and Western esoteric thought and practice. What he ultimately concluded from both his scientific and spiritual explorations is that love is the essence of everything.

**Accomplishments More Widely Known**

John Fetzer had an early interest in radio. He became hooked when he built his first wireless receiver-transmitter at age twelve and received an amateur radio station license when he was about 17. In addition to his science interests, he graduated from high school with letters in multiple sports. At Purdue University, he took classes in wireless transmission and became exposed to the work of Thomas Edison and Nicola Tesla, which opened his mind to new avenues of thought. Later he would further his scientific education with advanced studies in electronics, modern physics and mathematics.

As a young adult in 1923, John designed, tested, and built the first operating radio broadcasting station in southwestern Michigan, WEMC at Emanuel Missionary College, in Benton Harbor, Michigan. In 1924, John met Rhea Yeager, a cellist, as she prepared to perform at the school chapel. Two years later, they were married; a marriage that lasted until her death nearly 60 years later. Rhea, worked closely with John, later operating their radio stations and conducting field research during the early years.

In 1925, John went abroad to study the economic, sociological and engineering aspects of European broadcasting systems across the continent. Returning to the US, the next year he graduated from the National Radio Institute. When John graduated from Emmanuel Missionary

College in 1927, as class orator for the commencement ceremonies he presented a speech entitled, "Faith of Our Fathers". It presented his visionary belief in the worthiness of people in all stations of life and in man's responsibility to do good.

In 1930, John and Rhea purchased WEMC Radio. They moved it to Kalamazoo, Michigan, changed the call letters to WKZO, and John personally built the physical facility, from studio to transmitter. But in order to be permitted to broadcast, he had to help pioneer new technology—the directional antenna—which revolutionized broadcasting because it allowed multiple stations to broadcast simultaneously without impinging on each other's signals. Once developed, John shepherded the principle through Congress so it became a broadcast standard. With that development, broadcasting became established as a mass communication medium.

Asserting his leadership in the burgeoning industry, John assured that broadcasting was dedicated to serving the public good and embodied the highest standards of ethics and business conduct. He was the first president of the National Association of Broadcasters and chaired the development of the Broadcasting Code of Conduct.

Over the next three decades, John expanded his broadcasting enterprise to include more radio stations and added television to the mix. He also broadened his personal holdings to include film production, background music franchises, oil wells, Arizona land development, mining rights, and manufacturing.

During WWII, John was called to Washington DC to become the United States Censor of Radio. He was charged with supervising high-level security matters in the regulation of the four national radio networks, over nine hundred domestic radio stations, and twenty-six overseas shortwave stations. In 1945, at the invitation of General Eisenhower and under the auspices of the War Department, he made an inspection tour of the European Theater of Operations as a war correspondent, finding ways to support rehabilitation of the German radio industry and investigating postwar communications problems involving international radio between the US and a number of European countries.

John's special assignment as foreign correspondent to the radio, television and newspaper editors' mission in 1952 brought an unusual opportunity. Touring Europe and the Middle East, he met and interviewed a number of heads of state and high-level government officials ranging from German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Yugoslavia's Marshal Tito to Israeli Premier David Ben Gurion and Pope Pius XII. Also, in that year, John became the first chairman of the Television Code Review Board of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters (NARTB) in Washington DC.

As his business endeavors prospered, John expanded his philanthropic activities, founding The John E. Fetzer Foundation in 1954. Its purpose was to give grants for "religious, charitable, scientific, library, and/or educational purposes".

One of the featured programs on the Fetzer's radio station WKZO, was coverage of the Detroit Tigers baseball games. In 1956, John organized an eleven-man syndicate and purchased the Detroit Tigers Baseball Club, retaining a one-third ownership. Over the next several years, he purchased another third and, in 1962 purchased the final third becoming sole owner of the club, one of only two sole owners in either the American or National League. He maintained sole ownership of the Tigers until the early 1980s, one of the club's most successful periods, during which they won two World Series championships. Also, during that period, he became a member of the board of directors of the American League as well as chairman of the league's radio-television committee. He also served on the pension committee and sat on the executive council, the controlling body of baseball, under the chairmanship of Commissioner Ford C. Frick. Along with his wife, John headed the Detroit Tiger baseball tour of the Far East in 1962 under the auspices of the State Department as special guests of the Mainichi Newspapers and the Japanese government, including the Crown Prince and Princess.

John Fetzer served on a number of boards of directors and economic councils as well as academic advisory councils. He was a member of numerous committees, advisory boards and association, both governmental, civic, scientific and serving the arts. His final expression of sacrifice and service was to sell his broadcasting and sports empire to endow the John E. Fetzer Institute and the John E. Fetzer Memorial Trust. Announcing this unique move, he said, "I'm going out to seek something different. But what I've done is to invest in an enormous hope chest with the faith that the ultimate goal will be attained. That defies conventionality, and it's a matter of developing a new value structure."

That statement, as well as any, describes John Fetzer's vision and spirit for the work he did in the world.

### **Accomplishments of the Inner Man**

From an early age, John Fetzer was strongly influenced by religious experience. At eleven, he had the experience of holding onto the feet of Jesus Christ and riding up into the cosmos; its effects on him were profound. In 1918, bedridden for nine months with swine flu, he vowed that if he survived the disease he would devote himself to "the spiritual work of the Creator" — a vow he kept faithfully.

His academic studies at Purdue University brought him into contact with the work of Thomas Edison and Nicola Tesla, which fueled his interest in the links between the physical, mental and spiritual. His personal religious pursuits were guided by his mother, Della, and began with worship in the Methodist Church. When his mother converted to the Seventh Day Adventist Church, he followed and studied at the Adventist Emmanuel Missionary College in Berrien Springs Michigan where he established a radio station. In 1930, when his mother became a Baptist, John went on to join the Presbyterian Church in Kalamazoo, but soon began studying Freemasonry and Spiritualism.

In 1933 John joined the Masonic Lodge (Scottish Rite) and maintained active affiliation with the Masons for decades. In 1969, he was coronated to the 33<sup>rd</sup> degree, the highest possible level. The next year he visited Camp Chesterfield in central Indiana, which was associated with the Indiana Association of Spiritualists. He would make occasional visits to the Camp for readings and spiritual guidance over the next 40 years. It was from the Camp Chesterfield bookstore that he acquired books on a wide range of topics and philosophies, including Theosophy, and further broadened his spiritual horizons.

Always seeking the scientific and practical in the spiritual, it was not surprising that, in the late 1950's and early 1960's, John would become intrigued by the six-volume *The Life and Teachings of the Masters of the Far East*, by mining engineer Baird Spalding. Its principle of multiple universes circumnavigating a central sun or Source resonated with John and profoundly influenced his thinking from then on. John's 1967 paper, "This I Believe", laid out his personal spiritual philosophy, based largely upon the precepts of Freemasonry and Theosophy. He proposed that the time was coming when electronic instrumentation would make direct communication between those on the physical plane and those on higher spiritual planes commonplace. His book, *America's Agony*, published in 1971, presents his spiritual vision of the trials and triumphs of the American nation and its people.

In 1972 John contacted and visited institutions sponsoring scientific research in parapsychology to gain first-hand knowledge of the nature and extent of studies in that field. In 1974 he met astronaut Edgar Mitchell and pursued their mutual interest in parapsychological phenomena. John was elected to the board of Mitchell's Institute of Noetic Sciences, which was dedicated to exploring consciousness and human potential. In the same year, the Fetzer Foundation's trustees passed a resolution to support "educational programs, retreats, and credit and noncredit seminar courses relating to parapsychology." That year John and Rhea also toured Europe visiting parapsychological centers in England, Spain, Germany, and France.

When John began practicing Transcendental Meditation (TM) in 1975, he introduced it to the members of the Detroit Tigers baseball team on a voluntary basis. He also met with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and advised him on the use of television to teach and promote TM. John continued the TM practice for at least three years.

In the mid-1970s John began reading *A Course in Miracles*, which, for the next decade strongly influenced his spiritual philosophy. Also, during that period, the Fetzer Foundation began funding work in Long Term Training in Brain Energy Feedback carried on by Dr. James Hardt at the University of California San Francisco. In the next few years the Foundation would also fund the work directed by Dr. Robert Jahn in the Engineering Anomalies Research Program at Princeton University, to study extreme human abilities.

1981 was a hallmark year for John. In that year he met clairvoyant and spiritual teacher Jim Gordon, who served as his spiritual advisor for the remainder of his life. At Jim's suggestion, John began hosting the Monday Night Group, a spiritual study and support group which

focused for the next four years on envisioning the mission and activities of the Fetzer Foundation.

It was in 1984 that Jim Gordon met a man named John-Roger while on a trip to Egypt. Gordon recognized John-Roger as his spiritual teacher and also saw him fulfilling that function for John Fetzer. At Jim Gordon's recommendation, John began studying through John Roger's organization, the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness, in 1984. John-Roger called what he was presenting "Soul Transcendence" which he described as knowing oneself as a Soul, and more than that, as one with God, not as a theory but as a living reality. Fundamentally, these teachings were based on surat shabd yoga, or chanting the sacred names of God. In the spring of 1985, John met with John-Roger, was initiated into the Sound Current studies, and he continued this spiritual practice daily for the rest of his life.

In 1989, John presented a position paper addressing the mission of the Fetzer Institute (the reorganized Fetzer Foundation). His concluding thought was, "I believe there is a certain consciousness of synthesis that brings forth a light that some refer to as the 'avatar symmetry' that is here, ready to assist all who are connected with the Institute to delineate its mission. Remember, whatever the final verdict turns out to be, its summary will be 'unconditional love.' That is our avatar of the future, because love is the unifying energy field that mobilizes the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual resources in the caring and sharing with one another."

John E. Fetzer died February 20, 1991, a month shy of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Personal Philanthropy**

1953 – Fetzer purchases KOLN-TV in Nebraska then donates it to the University of Nebraska the following year.

1981 – John Fetzer pledges one million dollars to Western Michigan University for its new business center.

### **Honors and Awards**

In addition to being entrusted with work of great importance to the people of the United States of America, John Fetzer was often recognized for his service and generosity. Among the numerous honors and awards he received were:

1958 Awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from Western Michigan University for his pioneering efforts in mass communications.

1962 Received Muzak's Golden Ear Award for "clearly distinguished achievements in public service affairs."

1969 Coroneted a Sovereign Grand Inspector General, 33rd degree Mason, and made an Honorary Member of the Supreme Council.

1969 Received the National Association of Broadcasters Distinguished Service Award, the highest award of the broadcasting industry.

1979 Received an honorary engineering degree from Lawrence Institute of Technology.

1981 Recognized at the Broadcast Pioneers Banquet in Kalamazoo for Fetzer Broadcasting's 50 years in the community. John Fetzer accepted the Golden Mike Award on behalf of WKZO from the Broadcast Pioneers for adherence to quality, integrity, and responsibility in programming and management.

The John Fetzer Award for Meritorious Services to Baseball is established by the Milwaukee Brewers.

1983 The John E. Fetzer Business Center at Western Michigan University is dedicated.

1984 Inducted into the Michigan Sports Hall of Fame.

John Fetzer receives the Baseball Commissioner's Executive Award for Excellence in Baseball.

1986 John Fetzer is listed in Forbes Magazine as one of the 400 wealthiest people in the U.S.

#### **Publications by/about John E. Fetzer**

One Man's family

Men from Wengen

On a Handshake

America's Agony, with intro by Jacob Needleman

John E. Fetzer and the Quest for the New Age